

## SIMPLE BUT TRUE

Grimsby, Aug. 21/11

The O.T. account of Naaman dipping 7 times in the Jordan reminds us of a restoration principle that speaks of the simplicity and necessity of hearing and obeying God. When approached with a cure for his leprosy, Naaman said in anger *"I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper."* (2 Kings 5:11 ESV)

By the time the "restorationists" began to point people back to the Bible the idea of *"being saved from sin"* and more particularly, *"how to do it"* had become veiled. More than this, the new standards, which were as many as there were denominations, were so complex and non-decisive it was hard for common people to find out what was right.

God to the rescue....in the form of individuals who sought N.T. truth.

**Walter Scott** was born in 1796 and grew up to be educated at the university of Glasgow. His parents always wished him to become a Presbyterian minister. In 1818 he moved to N.Y. and taught languages on Long Island. Later he moved to Pittsburgh and joined himself to a small church there. George Forrester, a fellow Scotsman, had fallen under the influence of the earliest restorers- John Glas, The Haldanes, and Robert Sandeman. Mr Forrester, rejected human creeds, observed the Lord's Supper weekly, insisted on adult baptism by immersion and practised foot washing.

In 1823 Scott married Sarah Whitsette and they moved to Ohio and worked with the Campbells. Walter was chose to be the evangelist for their work. In this he was highly praised. Example: Dabney Phillips wrote: *"With his analytical mind, Scott was able to simplify a subject that all might understand. He told the people that the gospel was threefold—facts, commands, and promises. The **facts** were to be believed, the **commands** were to be obeyed, and the **promises** were to be enjoyed. He applied the gospel by emphasizing: (1) **faith** to change the heart, (2) **repentance** to change the life, (3) **baptism** to change the state, (4) **remission of sins** to cleanse from guilt, and (5) the **gift of the Holy Spirit** to help in the religious life and to make one a partaker of the divine nature. . . He once preached on 'Three Divine Missions'—one hour on the mission of Christ, one hour on the mission of the Holy Spirit, and one hour on the mission of the Church. He was able to hold his audience spell-bound for three hours"* (pages 136-137).

Between 1827 and 1830 Walter Scott developed a simple mnemonic illustration for the gospel plan of salvation, once that has been used in the Restoration Movement ever since. Based on Acts 2:38, he believed that salvation requires faith, repentance and baptism. This was the human response. God offered remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

His method was to ride into town, find a group of children playing and teach them this five finger exercise: faith, repentance, baptism, remission, H.S. He would then encourage them to go home and teach that to their parents and invite them to come to hear him preach on this subject that evening.

This, in principle and in practice is what we need to be doing. There is an ongoing cry to hear the word of God, not man's manufactured message.

**We must see God's word as sufficient, authoritative and final.**

1) John 17:17; 2)II Tim. 3:16,17; 3) John 6:66-68 4)Jude 3

**We need to be careful to differentiate between Scripture and Human Tradition.**

"A Church has pews in it." Mk.7:8

Unfortunately, for some, this fine tool (finger exercise) has cemented in their minds that the "steps" are mechanical and separated from the sin offering of Jesus.

It has the result that by just doing certain things an individual can be saved, as if there was not grace- no "but God" cf Eph. 4:4-8.

Since these are things we believe and hold to because they are found in the Bible, we might teach them independent of the whole story. Example of mine: "You teach water salvation." It was most difficult for me who knew what I wanted to say, how hard must it be if a second generation "mechanical" person who really doesn't know? In other words we must guard against salvation by anything other than Jesus the one who paid it all. Yes we can "proof text" our way into showing we are saved by *hope, faith, love, obedience, baptism, repentance, etc* but this can be very lacking in anything spiritual and just wrong!

When trapped, we utter, "Yes, I believe in the grace of God, John 3:16 says so," but we often are not really trusting in Him, but ourselves, evident in the statements we make and the lives we live.

A brave man, I once met one time, (he was very old then) put his neck on the block for a better way of communicating "the plan of salvation." He knew and believed what Walter Scott taught was true when Scott said it, but had become so familiar and associated with Churches of Christ that the words didn't carry much weight to some.

**K. C. Moser** was a second-generation preacher in our brotherhood, loved by all who heard him for many years. He was kept busy with week-long meetings out of town, writing for two brotherhood periodicals and employed by one of them. Then he began to come to the conclusion that all his words were shallow. He was not tying the five finger exercise back to the cross, as Walter Scott had done. It had become rote and easy to say without thinking. So, he changed his preaching..... *.....and all his meetings were cancelled!* He got fired from the paper. Articles written for the other periodical were returned. Then, he got written up in the gospel periodical he had worked with as "a Baptist in Church of Christ clothes." **THE ONLY THING HE DID WAS TO SHIFT THE EMPHASIS BACK TO THE BLOODY CROSS FROM THE WORKS ORIENTED CHURCH.**

No one could call him a *liberal* or *modernist* but they could accuse him of changing for the truth. The restoration spirit calls us to return to the Bible at any cost!

**CONCLUSION:** The obligation is upon us to be like Walter Scott. Learn the Bible and keep it simple. Know the true answer to "*what must I do to be saved?*" Be able to explain to another. Use the five fingers if necessary.

But because there is a tendency for the "*much used*" to become meaningless rote, we need to know where to place the emphasis. Avon Malone said at lectures he thought the *over use* and improper emphasis on steps was brought on by the onslaught of opposition, say at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The louder the "*faith only*" people hollered the more we said "*faith, repentance and baptism.*" The more they questioned the greater the search for other "*Bible*" arguments for action or works.

Brother Walter Scott brought us a marvelous and simple tool to illustrate a Bible teaching. We need to preserve it as a tool to get us closer to God not as a platform from which to argue our point.